



Retold: The Story of Jesus

Steve Lipscomb

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A tried-and-true religious story retold with creativity, joviality, contemporary language, and a feisty travel companion camel for Jesus.

Episcopal priest Steve Lipscomb offers up a lighthearted novelization of the life and times of Jesus, replete with familiar gospel tales. *Retold* is a playful and approachable introduction to an endlessly fascinating figure.

Readers will recognize much from Jesus's infancy in Lipscomb's pages: Mary conceives as a virgin, retains the love of her fiancé, and gives birth in a stable. But Lipscomb also begins to rearrange the story to his own liking early on, locating the stable on Joseph's crowded family homestead rather than amongst strangers. This push and pull between what is already understood and what may have been is retained throughout.

The characters in the tale are revealed as a charming, sometimes slightly troublesome, bunch. Magdalene appears early on, a beautiful girl who must evade society's lust and navigate a burgeoning love triangle between moody Peter, Jesus, and herself. Jesus matures from a showy childhood—midrashic stories of clay birds taking flight, and childhood bullies raised from the dead, are shared—to become a responsible young adult soon bitten by the travel bug.

Jesus's travels abroad, which take him from Samaria to India to China, prove to be the most marked deviations from the traditional tale—if you don't count a cast penchant for using contemporary language, particularly the ever-present "holy crap!" With a feisty camel named Rocky as his companion, Jesus travels from nation to nation, discussing religion and philosophy. Wherever he goes, people recognize that he is special, which opens up interesting spaces for discussions of the universal nature of his message.

When Jesus returns to Israel, the story resumes a traditional pace. Confrontations with religious authorities and Roman leaders are articulated as in the gospels, as are the miracles and parables which led to a following. While the decision not to challenge some of these traditional narratives—particularly surrounding culpability for Jesus's death—may moor the story unhelpfully, readers may appreciate the familiarity of latter pages.

Retold delivers a tried-and-true religious story with creativity and joviality, acknowledging both the elasticity and the eternal appeal of religious narratives.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Fall 2015)

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